

Message Text

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCEUR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
CINCUSAFE
USDOCOLANDSOUTHEAST IZMIR
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 4157

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EALR, TU
SUBJ: ISSUES IN THE TURKISH ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. DESPITE A PROFUSION OF ORATORY, TURKEY'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS PRODUCED NO REPEAT NO GREAT NATIONAL DEBATE ON TURKEY'S FUTURE COURSE. THE TWO MAJOR PARTY LEADERS, PRIMIN DEMIREL OF THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP) AND ECEVIT OF THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP), HAVE AVOIDED OFFERING SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS TO TURKEY'S LONG LIST OF PRESSING NATIONAL PROBLEMS. AS A COROLLARY, THEY HAVE ALSO AVOIDED MAKING SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS TO POST-ELECTION ACTION. INSTEAD, THEIR
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CAMPAIGNS HAVE EMPHASIZED IMAGE-BUILDING, WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF GNERALITY AND A STRONG STRESS ON THE INDIVIDUAL STYLES AND PERSONALITIES OF THE MAJOR LEADERS WITH WICH VOTERS CAN IDENTIFY.
2. THE SMALLER PARTIES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF NECMETTIN ERBAKAN AND HIS NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), HAVE SIMILARLY STAYED AWAY FROM SPECIFIC STANDS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES. (ERBAKAN'S POSITION IS DESCRIBED IN ANKARA 4053.) GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SMALLER

PARTIES AS POTENTIAL PARTNERS IN A COALITION LED BY ONE OF THE MAJOR PARTIES, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) HAS CAMPAIGNED

STRONGLY AGAINST THE JP, THE NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY (KNAP) AGAINST THE RPP, AND THE NSP AGAINST BOTH MAJOR PARTIES (ALTHOUGH ECEVIT, UNLIKE DEMIREL, HAS REFRAINED FROM ATTACKING THE NSP IN HIS SPEECHES)

THE REPUBLICAN RELIANCE PARTY (RR) HAS NOT TAKEN A STRONG POSITION CRITICIZING EITHER OF THE LARGE PARTIES.

3. IN OCCASIONAL ALLUSIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF US-TURKISH RELATIONS DURING CAMPAIGN SPEECHES, BOTH ECEVIT AND DEMIREL HAVE SOUGHT TO PROJECT THE IMAGE OF RESOLUTE LEADERS WHO COULD BE FIRM AND PROTECT TURKEY'S INDEPENDENCE AND DEFENSE IN RELATION WITH THE US. HOWEVER, ECEVIT HAS GONE SOMEWHAT BEYOND DEMIREL IN PROTRAYING HIMSELF AS SOMEONE WHO SUCCESSFULLY STOOD UP TO THE AMERICANS IN LIFTING THE POPPY BAN AND IN INTERVENING IN CYPRUS, AND WHO WANTS GREATER INDEPENDENCE FOR TURKEY. THE ISSUES OF CYPRUS AND GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS HAVE RARELY SURFACED IN THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE TWO PRINCIPAL LEADERS.

4. ECEVIT HAS MADE DOMESTIC SECURITY HIS PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN TOPIC, BUT HAS NOT MADE CLEAR WHAT HE WOULD DO ABOUT THE PROBLEM. DEMIREL HAS ACCUSED ECEVIT OF BEING THE "INSTIGATOR OF ANARCHY," AND HAS URGED THAT THE CONSTITUTION AND ELECTION LAWS BE CHANGED SO AS TO MAKE POSSIBLE EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUNTRY; HOWEVER, HE HAS NOT SPECIFIED WHAT CHANGES HE WOULD SEEK.

5. IN THE PROCESS OF MUTUAL CRITICISM, BOTH ECEVIT AND DEMIREL HAVE SUCCEEDED IN PRESENTING THEIR PARTIES AS POLARIZED WHEN IN FACT

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THEY OVERLAP ACROSS THE CENTER. ECEVIT HAS ACCUSED DEMIREL OF BEING A "FASCIST," WHILE THE JP HAS BASED A LARGE PART OF ITS CAMPAIGNING ON THE DANGER OF A TURN TO THE LEFT UNDER ECEVIT. (THE JP'S CAMPAIGN IN

THIS REGARD IS SUMMARIZED IN A CAMPAIGN POSTER WHICH PROTRAYS THE HIGHWAY SYMBOL FOR "NO LEFT TURN," WITH THE PARTY'S INITIALS UNDERNEATH.)

6. BOTH DEMIREL AND ECEVIT HAVE AVOIDED SPECIFIC COMMENTARY ON HOW THEY WOULD HANDLE TURKEY'S PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. ECEVIT HAS ATTEMPTED TO BLAME THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT FOR THE RISING FOREIGN DEBT BURDEN AND SERIOUS FOREIGN EXCHANGE SHORTAGES, BUT THIS HAS NOT APPEARED TO BE A POPULAR ISSUE OR ONE THAT THE ELECTORATE

CAN UNDERSTAND. DEMIREL HAS CONTINUED TO PORTRAY HIMSELF AS THE POLITICIAN-ENGINEER WHO BEST UNDERSTANDS THE INTRICACIES OF ECONOMICS AND WHO CAN BEST SUPERVISE THE INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENTS NECESSARY TO BUILD THE "GREAT TURKEY."

7. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW MILLIYET'S EDITOR ABDI IPEKCI ASKED BOTH ECEVIT AND DEMIREL HOW THEY WOULD SOLVE THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC

AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IF THEY CAME TO POWER ALONE. BOTH LEADERS HEDGED. DEMIREL DENIED THAT TURKEY'S EXTERNAL CREDIT LINES WERE OVER-EXTENDED ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT CAPITAL INFLOWS HAD SLOWED DOWN DURING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD. HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT GIVEN TURKEY'S CHRONIC BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT, THE ONLY WAY TO DEVELOP WAS TO BORROW FROM ABROAD. ECEVIT SAID HIS EXPERTS WERE STUDYING THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND HE WOULD TAKE QUICK, DEFINITE MEASURES TO SOLVE THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROBLEM. NEITHER LEADER HAS FOCUSSED ON ECONOMIC SACRIFICES THAT MAY BE NECESSARY AFTER THE ELECTION. ECEVIT TOLD A CROWD IN ERZURUM THAT THE RPP WOULD DEMAND SACRIFICES IF IT CAME TO POWER. SACRIFICES HOWEVER WOULD NOT BE ASKED OF THE PEOPLE, BUT ONLY OF THOSE WHO EXPLOIT THE PEOPLE.

8. THERE MAY BE A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR THE PARTY LEADERS' UNWILLINGNESS TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS. ONE REASON PROBABLY IS THAT REALISTIC SOLUTIONS WOULD BE BOTH UNPLEASANT AND UNLIKELY TO ATTRACT VOTES. FURTHERMORE, DETAIL ED,

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HAR-TO-UNDERSTAND PROGRAMS DO NOT GENERATE ENTHUSIASM IN THE KIND OF RALLIES THE LEADERS HAVE BEEN ADDRESSING. IN THE RACE TO CAPTURE THE BROADEST POSSIBLE RANGE OF SUPPORT, DETAILED POSITIONS COULD BECOME LIABILITIES. FINALLY, IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT BOTH DEMIREL AND ECEVIT, LOOING AHEAD TO THE PRIME MISTERSHIP, WANT TO BE A SFREE AS POSSIBLE FROM PRIOR COMMITMENTS. ALL IN ALL, FROM THE STANDPOINT OF US INTERESTS, SUCH FREEDOM WOULD SEEM ADVANTAGEOUS. MACOMBER

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